



The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) is a 16-member commission working to boost access to higher education for students in the West and, as importantly, to ensure their success. Arizona has been a member of WICHE since 1953.

Benefits to Arizona

- ▶ Tens of thousands of students from Arizona have attended undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs in other Western states through WICHE’s Student Access Programs, saving millions of dollars, thanks to reduced tuition rates. In just one of the programs, the Western Undergraduate Exchange, Arizona students and their families have saved \$136 million since 1998, when Arizona began using the program.
- ▶ Arizona has received funding to be part of numerous WICHE policy initiatives, including those focused on financing and financial aid, workforce policy, and other areas.
- ▶ Arizona has participated in WICHE initiatives related to distance education, workforce development, and behavioral health.

Doing the Math: Arizona’s Return on Investment

- ▶ In 2018-19 Arizona saved **\$18 million** through WICHE and spent \$153,000 for membership in the commission, yielding a **11,780 percent return on investment**.
- ▶ In the last five years, Arizona students’ savings from WUE alone have added up to **\$61.3 million**.

WICHE’s Student Access & Related Programs

Arizona is active in all three WICHE **Student Access Programs**: the Western Undergraduate Exchange, the Professional Student Exchange Program, and the Western Regional Graduate Program. In 2018-19, Arizona’s students and families saved **\$18 million**. Arizona saved money, too, through not having to establish and maintain costly programs in a number of areas, including some in healthcare.

Western Undergraduate Exchange. Arizona students have enrolled in undergraduate programs beyond Arizona’s borders through the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) since 1998. In 2018-19, 1,614 students from Arizona were enrolled in out-of-state programs at reduced rates (150 percent of resident tuition), saving \$13 million in tuition and fees – the average student savings amounted to \$8,000. In the last 10 years, students have saved **\$103.4 million**.

Arizona benefits from WUE in another way: by receiving students from out of state. Arizona’s institutions can choose how many out-of-state slots to offer and in which areas, allowing them to make the best use of their resources by accepting students in underenrolled programs. There’s a workforce benefit for the state, too, as students often stay in Arizona after graduating. In 2018-19 Arizona received 7,917 students through WUE.

Professional Student Exchange Program. Arizona has sent more than **2,699 students** to professional programs through the Professional Student Exchange Program (PSEP), with students studying in a host of critical fields, including dentistry, optometry, osteopathic medicine, and veterinary medicine. Historically, some 80 percent of PSEP students return to Arizona to pursue their professional careers. In addition, in 2018-19 the state received 132 students and \$2.6 million in support fees on behalf of students.

Western Regional Graduate Program. Arizona’s postgraduates also enroll in graduate programs through the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP), which offers access to more than 700 high-quality programs at some 60 institutions in all WICHE states. WRGP programs run the gamut, but emerging social, environmental, resource-management, and healthcare fields are particular strengths, as are innovative interdisciplinary programs. In 2018-19 Arizona sent 77 students to out-of-state institutions, while receiving 348.

Interstate Passport[®] is a program that facilitates block transfer of lower-division general education based on learning outcomes and proficiency criteria. It includes learning outcomes for nine knowledge and skill areas developed by faculty at institutions in multiple states as well as an academic progress tracking system for Passport transfer students designed by registrars and institutional researchers. The goal of the Interstate Passport is to eliminate transfer students' unnecessary repetition of learning previously achieved.

WICHE's Added Value

Arizona gains added value from WICHE's programs in policy, workforce development, technology, mental health, and other areas.

WICHE's 9th edition of *Knocking at the College Door* high school graduate projections, released in December 2016 (and updated in September 2017 with additional data), describes how the nation and many states have entered a decade of stabilization in the number of high school graduates through about 2025—with substantial contraction in the number of White high school graduates and rapid increases of non-White populations—before entering a period of fewer high school graduates related to a recent “baby bust.” The WICHE region will generally track the national trend, but it will be less impacted by the contraction of White youth and more influenced by a projected 20 percent increase of Hispanic high school graduates through 2024 and then decrease by about the same amount between 2025 and 2032.

There is an abundance of information on knocking.wiche.edu, including the publication and other reports, projections data, interactive data dashboards, recorded webinars and presentations, and Arizona's state profile, which indicates that:

- ▶ Arizona is projected to produce 66,900 high school graduates per year, on average, between school years 2012 and 2032. There will be about 10% more graduates in 2024 than in 2012, but this increase will then be

followed by a 14% decrease in the number of graduates produced by 2032.

- ▶ Non-White public high school graduates are already about 52% of all Arizona public high school graduates. The non-White share will increase only slightly, to 55% by 2032, as most populations decrease in number after 2024.

Policy & Workforce Development. Arizona has been an active participant in projects to support better-informed decision-making at the state level. WICHE initiatives have been sponsored by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Lumina Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Helmsley Charitable Trusts, the Ford Foundation, the U.S. Department of Education, and others. Teams of policymakers and education leaders from Arizona participate each year in regional policy forums and meetings hosted by WICHE. WICHE has also worked closely with Arizona decisionmakers in a number of key areas, including outcomes-based funding, the alignment of college education with workforce demand, and financial aid.

Regional Academic Leadership Initiatives. The Arizona Board of Regents and the University of Arizona are members of the **Western Academic Leadership Forum** (the Forum). Their official representatives are the chief academic leaders of the four-year institutions and their related system and state agencies, who address regional higher education issues, and engage in resource sharing. The **Western Alliance for Community College Academic Leaders** (the Alliance) brings academic leaders of community colleges and technical schools and systems together with state governing and coordinating boards associated with two-year institutions to exchange ideas and information, share resources and expertise, and collaborate on regional initiatives. The Maricopa Community Colleges and all its institutions are members, as are Arizona Western College and Eastern Arizona College.

Technology. Arizona has been involved with the **WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies** (WCET) the leader in the practice, policy, and advocacy of technology-enhanced learning in higher education. WCET is widely recognized as one of the most informative, reliable, and forward-thinking organizations regarding the role of technology and innovation in higher education. Our growing membership includes more than 350 institutions, state and systemwide higher education agencies, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and corporations in nearly all U.S. states and many Canadian provinces. WCET members have access to trusted information on emerging trends, policies, and exemplars of successful learning technology innovation in practice. Key WCET activities include an annual meeting, leadership summits, national webcasts, and email list-based discussions among members. Major topics of interest to the WCET membership include

Figure 1. Arizona Savings and Revenues through WICHE Programs in 2018

Student Savings

WUE	\$12,979,886
PSEP	\$3,863,247
WRGP	\$1,180,795
Total Student Savings	\$18,023,928

Revenue to AZ

Institutions (PSEP)	\$2,629,824
TOTAL	\$20,653,752



“WUE has made it possible for me to attend an out-of-state university that offered my major: a bachelor’s in dental hygiene. Not only has WUE made school affordable, but it’s also challenged me to work for my goals in a set time frame.”

– Megan, Arizona resident,
Idaho State University, Dental Hygiene

student success, managing e-learning, faculty success, emerging technologies, and evolving policy issues. University of Arizona’s Online Nursing PhD program (2005), Cochise College Serving Deaf Student Needs program (2006), and Rio Salado College’s Online Teaching Education “Virtual Practicum” (2007) and Peer-to-Peer Plagiarism Project (2010), won the WCET Outstanding Work (WOW) award, which recognizes effective and innovative uses of technology to address specific needs in higher education.

Behavioral Health. The Behavioral Health Program’s activities in Arizona over the past year include the following projects:

- ▶ WICHE manages an Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) Fidelity Review Team to support the quality improvement of Assertive Community Treatment, Supported Employment, Permanent Supported Housing, and Consumer Operated Services that are a part of the services required as the result of a class action lawsuit settlement.
- ▶ WICHE BHP collaborates with Mercy Maricopa Integrated Care to develop a training academy to increase workforce expertise through implementing training strategies for three evidence-based practices: Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Transition to Independence Model, and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Substance Abuse.

State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA).

SARA is a voluntary, nationwide initiative of states that makes distance education courses more accessible to students across state lines and makes it easier for states to regulate and institutions to participate in interstate distance education. The effort initially was funded by \$3.2 million in grants from Lumina Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and is now supported by fees paid by institutions. The initiative is administered by the country’s four regional higher education compacts: the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC), the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE), the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) – and overseen by the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA). States and institutions that choose to participate agree to operate under common standards and procedures, providing a more uniform and less costly regulatory environment for institutions, more focused

oversight responsibilities for states, and better resolution of student complaints. Arizona is among the WICHE states that are members of W-SARA in this reciprocal relationship.

Other Initiatives. The Pima County Community College system, with six campuses and four learning and education centers, participates in the **Master Property Program (MPP)**. The program helps institutions in the West reduce their insurance premiums and improve their coverage. Created by the Midwestern Higher Education Compact in 1994 and expanded to the WICHE region in 2004, the MPP includes more than 160 campuses with total insured values of over \$93.4 billion. WICHE is also partnering with MHEC to offer **MHECare**, a health program providing vetted, competitively priced medical benefits for students. Underwritten by UnitedHealthcare StudentResources, MHECare offers a variety of plans. In a third collaboration with MHEC, WICHE extends the benefits of **MHECtech** to colleges and universities in the West, enabling them to purchase hardware and software products and services from competitively bid purchasing agreements to reduce costs.

Arizona & WICHE’s Leadership

The WICHE Commission, with three commissioners from each member state, molds the organization’s mission and set its priorities. Arizona’s commissioners are: Rita Hartung Cheng, president, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff; and Kathleen Goepfinger, president and chief executive officer, Midwestern University, Glendale. One appointment is pending.



Rita Hartung
Cheng



Kathleen
Goepfinger



“Being a first-generation graduate student in my family has been a humbling honor, but also difficult to pursue when finances are tight. I have aspired to go to optometry school since my sophomore year in high school. I am grateful to the WICHE PSEP program for alleviating the financial stress and supporting my dreams and ambitions.

It has been a true blessing to be awarded this support, and I encourage everyone to apply.”

– Lois, Arizona resident,
Pacific University, Optometry

WICHE also seeks assistance and advice from policymakers, educators, administrators, and legislators. WICHE’s **Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC)**, composed of legislator-members from each state—including Rep. Paul Boyer and Sen. Catherine Miranda—has been crucial in this regard. The LAC works to keep the commission’s Executive Committee and staff current on significant legislative issues related to higher education, provides input on WICHE initiatives, and advises staff on a host of issues. WICHE staff also serve the LAC, informing members about emerging policy issues in the West.

WICHE Commission & Staff

The WICHE Commission includes three gubernatorial selected representatives from each member: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawai’i, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, the U.S. Pacific territories and freely associated states, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. Members work collaboratively to provide educational access and excellence for all citizens.

WICHE and its staff are headquartered in Boulder, Colo., and operate out of the State Higher Education Policy Center, which WICHE owns with the State Higher Education Executive Officers association and the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems. Staff leadership includes:

Demarée Michelau, president

Michael Abbiatti, vice president for educational technologies and executive director, WCET

Patrick Lane, vice president, policy analysis and research

Jere Mock, vice president, programs and services

Dennis Mohatt, vice president, behavioral health

How can I find out more about WICHE?

Visit our website at wiche.edu or contact 303.541.0200

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Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

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